HOW WELL DO I UNDERSTAND MY COMMUNITY? (Community Assessment)

Before embarking on your program, it is important to conduct a sound assessment of your community so that you will ensure your program achieves its objectives. This assessment will provide you with data to develop community-specific materials to supplement the *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* creative pieces and messages provided in this toolkit.

Many of the techniques described in the following sections were undertaken to develop the messages and materials in support of *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*, as summarized in the research sections of this toolkit ("Who Am I Trying to Reach?" and "Research: *It All Adds Up* Initiative-Design and Target-Audience"). Research techniques such as analysis of quantitative market research, focus group interviews, and consultation with experts were employed to develop both the content and tone of the print and broadcast ads. Similarly, extensive audience analysis was conducted in the original pilot site locations.

Transportation and Air Quality Data

The more information you have about an issue, the better prepared you will be to plan an effective communications program. Begin by reviewing existing data in your community on transportation, traffic congestion, and air pollution. Find information on your air-quality-standard attainment status; the extent of your traffic congestion; the major sources of air pollution to which individuals' actions contribute (e.g. doing errands at peak drive times in poorly maintained vehicles) and their subsequent effects on individuals and the community; solutions or preventive measures that are being implemented or proposed; laws and statutes related to these issues, and other relevant information. The "Transportation and Air Quality Facts" section of this toolkit contains a variety of statistics that illustrate the problem of air pollution and traffic congestion. You can supplement these with data specific to your community, from a number of sources, such as those described below and listed in the Audience Analysis Chart in this section.

Gauging Community Awareness, Attitudes, and Behaviors

In addition to reviewing local transportation and air-quality related data, you need to know what citizens in your community think about these issues, their perception of your area's air pollution and traffic congestion, their thoughts on taking steps to address these problems, etc. By asking your target audience(s) specific questions, you can focus and streamline the information you need.

The Audience Analysis Chart in this section includes key questions and possible sources of information about your target audience(s). Use the information you collect to lay the foundation for your strategic communications plan, which is described in the next section of this toolkit.

Many of the answers to the questions posed in the chart are available from resources such as libraries, organizations, and experts in your community. Possible data sources and assessment methods include:

- Consulting with experts on transportation and air quality. They can refer you to existing data and articles as well as other experts. Contact national resources, such as the web sites of the Environmental Protection Agency (http://www.epa.gov "Where You Live") and the Department of Transportation (http://www.dot.gov) to access a wide variety of resources, including bibliographies, resource books, articles, and experts. Meet with or call key experts in your community to determine the availability of local data. You may be able to access many of these people through your local coalition.
- Reviewing local, state, and national knowledge, awareness, and attitude survey results. These surveys, conducted among a fairly large sample of people, provide very reliable data that can help you choose which messages to emphasize, as well as a measurable baseline for evaluating your program. Typically, the surveys measure many of the factors influencing behavior, such as knowledge of an issue (e.g. congestion and air quality), attitudes, skills, and perceived social norms. Your state DOT or local transportation or environmental organizations may have already gathered some of this information. If such a survey does not exist, explore options for conducting your own or adding relevant questions to existing surveys. A second survey using the same questions then should be conducted at the end of the program. Comparing the two sets of results can help you decide whether the public's knowledge, awareness, and attitudes changed. See the "Evaluation" section of this toolkit for additional information and a survey that we recommend you use.
- Conducting a literature review using the library, the Internet, or LexisNexis to find relevant articles, studies, and census data on your target audience(s).
- Conducting focus groups with your target audience(s) to determine their attitudes about an issue. Focus groups involve relatively few people in a 90-minute discussion group, which allows much more flexibility in asking questions than a survey. They are often a good complement to surveys, which tell you what people think and do, but not why. The results of focus groups, however, cannot be generalized to an entire community because the participants are not representative of the population as a whole.
- Reviewing the "Who Am I Trying to Reach?" and "Research: *It All Adds Up* Initiative-Design and Target-Audience" sections of this toolkit on the research that resulted in the *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* messages' and materials' tone and content.
- Conducting pre-campaign telephone surveys or intercept surveys to identify public attitudes and awareness of local air quality and transportation issues in your community. Samples of a telephone and intercept survey are included at the end of this chapter or on the <u>italladdsup.gov</u> website.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are small group discussions of approximately seven to nine people in which a moderator, using a prepared outline, leads the participants through a series of questions about a given topic, with the flexibility to explore feelings and attitudes. Focus group participants are encouraged to be honest and open about their comments and responses. The focus group process allows in-depth probing of the target audiences' knowledge, awareness levels, ideas on particular issues, motivation, as well as their perceptions of and responses to specific materials. Properly used, focus groups can serve as a good source of general information and ideas, although they will not provide the statistically reliable data gleaned from surveys. This is true for two reasons: focus group participants are usually chosen because they have something in common (rather than randomly, as in surveys), and the questions may vary (rather than the same questions being asked in the same way of everyone, as in surveys).

As described in the "Initiative Overview," "Who Am I Trying to Reach?" and "Research: *It All Adds Up* Initiative-Design and Target-Audience" sections of this toolkit, focus groups were initially conducted for the *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* initiative to obtain critical information on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the general driving public. Additional groups were convened to test potential program concepts and messages before creative materials were produced.

A market research firm can help you to plan and conduct focus group testing by providing services such as recruiting participants, providing a moderator, conducting the groups, and preparing a final summary report. This section of the toolkit contains a sample focus-group-participant recruitment screener, moderator's guide, and focus-group-participant information sheet to help you understand the tools a research firm typically develops and to assist you in overseeing the focus group process. The screener is used to locate participants that match the attributes of your target audience(s). The moderator's guide is a prepared outline used to steer the discussion. The participant information sheet is filled out at the end of the focus group by each person and is used to obtain additional factual details. While participants are filling in the information, the moderator can check with you to see if any additional questions need to be asked. Participants are normally provided with refreshments and a small monetary compensation, which your market research firm helps you determine, based on your geographic area and the issue you are examining.

To locate a firm to conduct your focus groups, you could call a local chapter of a national public relations, advertising, or communications association (e.g. American Association of Public Opinion Research, Marketing Research Association, Public Relations Society of America, and American Association of Advertising Agencies). You could also look for directories of such firms at the library and in your phone book's yellow pages under "market research."

Note: Surveys and focus groups require an array of skills and should be conducted by trained professionals. If your organization has the budget to hire a market research firm to conduct surveys, please read the "Evaluation" section of this toolkit and visit <u>italladdsup.gov</u> to get survey questions that have been carefully researched and designed to gather information aligned with the objectives of increasing awareness and changing attitudes about transportation choices that contribute to cleaner air. For your convenience, the questions are available in multiple

formats (e.g., telephone survey and one-on-one "intercept" survey). Also, at the end of this section are a sample focus-group screener, moderator's guide, and participant information sheet, if you have enough funds to allow you to probe your target audiences' knowledge, awareness levels, ideas on particular issues, motivation, as well as their perceptions of and responses to specific materials. If you do not have access to trained market research expertise, we strongly suggest that you rely on existing research, such as that summarized in the "Research: *It All Adds Up* Initiative Design and Target Audience" section of this toolkit, rather than attempt to conduct your own. If you only have enough funds to cover either pre/post campaign surveys or focus groups, we recommend that you conduct the surveys, because they will give you quantitative information by which you can evaluate your program.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS CHART

To help guide your information-gathering process, provided below is a set of key questions and possible data sources. Note: Please review the extensive research results from testing *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* messages and materials in toolkit sections "Who Am I Trying to Reach?" and "Research: *It All Adds Up* Initiative-Design and Target-Audience."

KEY QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES		
What is our transportation and air quality issue?	 Local statistics on air pollution and traffic congestion Local universities and University of South Florida (http://www.cutr.eng.usf.edu), Texas Transportation Institute, (tti.tamu.edu), and Georgia Institute of Technology (http://www.transaq.ce.gatech.edu) 		
What is the demographic distribution of individuals affected by this issue (e.g., age, sex, economic level)?	 Census Bureau data (http://www.census.gov) State and local transportation and air quality agencies data 		
Who is our target audience(s) and what is its size(s)?	 Census Bureau data (http://www.census.gov) State and local transportation and air quality agencies data 		
Is our target audience(s) aware of the issue?	 Surveys Focus groups Consultation w/experts Literature review Internet 		
Does our target audience(s) have the necessary facts about the issue? Does our target audience(s) know how to prevent or respond to the issue?	 Surveys Focus groups Literature review Consultation w/experts 		
Does our target audience(s) believe they are contributing to the problem?	SurveysFocus groups		
Does our target audience(s) recognize the benefits of changing their actions?	SurveysLiterature reviewFocus groups		

Does our target audience(s) feel they will receive positive social support if they adopt the recommended actions (i.e. do social norms support or undermine change)?	SurveysFocus groupsLiterature review
Does our target audience think they can perform the recommended actions (i.e. are they realistic)?	SurveysFocus groups
What are the misperceptions among our target audience(s) re: the link between transportation and air quality?	SurveysFocus groupsLiterature review
Does our target audience have the knowledge/skills to perform the desired action(s)?	SurveysLiterature reviewFocus groups
Are there any barriers to change? What kinds of transportation options are available to our residents? Are needed services and materials available and accessible to our target audience(s)?	 Audit of community services and materials Consultation w/experts Focus groups Surveys
Are individuals starting to change? What are the trends?	Surveys Local statistics on use of alternative modes of transportation, changes in air quality over time, etc.
What individuals or groups influence the target audience(s)' actions?	 Consultation w/experts Literature review Surveys Focus groups

Identify Channels for Reaching Your Target Audience(s)

To successfully reach your target audience(s), it is important to identify the most popular and credible communications channels among each group. Channels may include the media; materials such as advertisements or brochures; and interpersonal communications, such as with community leaders and service providers. Key questions for identifying the best communications channels and possible data sources are listed in the following chart:

KEY QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES	
What are the most popular communications channels among our target audience(s) (e.g. number of hours per day spent with television, radio, print)?	 Commercial data, such as Nielsen and Arbitron Media trade associations Focus groups Surveys (intercept surveys, pre- and post campaign) 	
What are the most popular radio stations, television programs, and viewing and listening times among our target audience(s)?	 Commercial data Television outlets' data Local advertising/public relations agencies Radio stations' data 	
What are the most popular print publications among our target audience(s)?	Commercial data Local advertising/public relations agencies	

	Publications' data, e.g. circulation		
Is there billboard or transit advertising in our community? Number of locations and reach?	Data from companies who own or manage the space		
Which movie theaters/live theaters are most popular? Are there opportunities to place PSAs/paid ads?	Assessment of popularity and geographic locationLocal theaters' data		
What is the geographic coverage of our media distribution? Does it reach all of our target audience(s)?	Media directories (found at a local library or through a local public relations agency) provide lists and descriptions of media outlets		
Are local television, radio, or print outlets looking for programming, PSAs/paid ads, or story ideas?	Contact media outlets' advertising and news depts.Consult w/experts		
How popular are specific formats (e.g. talk shows, news, entertainment) with your target audience(s)?	Commercial dataFocus groups		
Do our media outlets have any restrictions regarding placement of PSAs/paid ads or programming content?	Contact media outlets Consult w/experts		
Where does our target audience(s) seek transportation/air quality services?	State and local transportation & air quality agencies Consult w/colleagues		

Choose the questions that will help you gather the most relevant information about your target audience(s). Consider contacting media outlets in your community to answer some of the questions. They can provide you with ratings, valuable qualitative market information, and demographic data that can help you design an advertising schedule. Also, consult with media trade associations, such as the American Association of Advertising Agencies or your local Advertising Club, which may provide free, general data on your target audience's media habits. Commercial media-habit surveys administered by Nielsen and Arbitron may be obtained from local public relations and advertising agencies.

Assess Credible Messengers for Reaching Your Target Audience(s)

Identifying the most popular and credible messengers to communicate your message is a key final step in the communications-planning process. Keep in mind that although some messengers may be very popular with the target audience, they may not be relevant spokespersons for transportation and air quality issues. Consider the pros and cons of using each potential spokesperson. For example, while a local entertainer may be popular with your target audience, his/her past or future behavior may affect the message he/she delivers regarding your issue.

Building a coalition with diverse membership can be especially valuable in reaching your target audience(s). Not only are the individual members credible with their constituents, but as a whole, the coalition can reach people who aren't aligned with a particular transportation or air quality stance. The fact that diverse interests can agree on the importance of these messages makes a strong statement to the public. For more information on building a coalition, see "Who Can I Ask for Help?"

Key questions and possible data sources to identify messengers include:

Who are the primary public figures that reach and influence our target audience(s) (e.g. media figures, entertainers, sports figures, political leaders, religious leaders)?	 Focus groups Content analysis of media coverage and advertising Advertising/public relations agencies Commercial surveys
Who are our most credible spokespersons and role models around issues of transportation/air quality?	Focus groupsSurveys with the target audience(s)
Who are our other popular community figures, such as teachers, employers, professionals?	Focus groupsSurveys with the target audience(s)
Who are the peer and opinion leaders among our target audience(s) (e.g. friends, family members)?	Focus groups

Taking the time to understand your audience(s) and to identify the relevant channels and messengers for reaching them will provide you with a strong foundation for developing a successful strategic communications plan for your program.

Focus Group Participant-Recruitment Screener

SAMPLE TRANSPORTATION/AIR QUALITY FOCUS GROUP SCREENER

Goal: To recruit adult drivers who might consider alternatives to driving alone

Hello.	This is	of, an independent marketing research firm. We are holding discussions			
particip	ate in one	f transportation and air quality issues. I would like to ask you some questions to see if you qualify to e of the discussion groups. The groups will be held on (DATE/TIME) and will last approximately shments will be served and you will receive \$ for your participation.			
1.	Have yo	ou or a member of your immediate family ever worked in advertising or marketing research?			
	()	Yes - THANK AND TERMINATE No			
2.	Have yo	ou participated in a focus group within the last six months?			
	()	Yes - THANK AND TERMINATE No			
3.	Do you	work for either a government agency or business that deals with transportation or the environment?			
	()	Yes - THANK AND TERMINATE No			
4.	Are you	a licensed driver?			
	()	Yes No - <i>THANK AND TERMINATE</i>			
5.	In what year were you born? ENTER YEAR:				
		USED, ASK: rou tell me if you were born: (READ CATEGORIES)			
	() () () ()	Before 1924 From 1925 to 1942 From 1943 to 1960 From 1961 to 1981, or From 1982 to now?			
6.		ical week, about how many times do you drive a passenger vehicle? Count each time you get the wheel and drive someplace.			
	() () ()	0 – 10 times/week - <i>THANK AND TERMINATE</i> 11 – 20 times/week 21 – 30 times/week more than 30 times/week			
7.	Are you () () () () () ()	Employed full-time Employed part-time Retired A student Currently unemployed - RECRUIT NO MORE THAN 2 FOR EACH FOCUS GROUP			

8.	How do	you usually commute to work?			
	()	Drive alone in a passenger vehicle (car or SUV) Other - RECRUIT NO MORE THAN 2 FOR EACH GROUP			
9.	Our study has to do with some issues related to our natural environment. Would you please tell me which of the statements best describes how you feel about the environment?				
	<u>THANK</u>	AND TERMINATE IF RESPONDENT AGREES WITH FIRST STATEMENT:			
	()	I am an environmentalist and think it is important to do whatever I can to protect our environment, even if that means doing things that are inconvenient or more costly.			
	<u>RECRU</u>	IT FROM RESPONDENTS WHO AGREE WITH EITHER OF THESE STATEMENTS:			
	()	I think it is important to take steps to protect the environment, but I don't think it's reasonable to expect people to do things that are inconvenient, time-consuming, or more costly.			
	()	The environment is somewhat important to me, although I often make decisions based on other factors, such as convenience or cost.			
	<u>THANK</u>	AND TERMINATE IF RESPONDENT AGREES WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:			
	()	I don't feel the condition of the environment warrants as much attention as some people think. Besides, there are too many more important things for me to think about.			
10.	Our study also has to do with automobile and SUV driving. Would you tell me which of the following statements best describes how you feel about driving your vehicle:				
	<u>THANK</u>	AND TERMINATE IF RESPONDENT AGREES WITH FIRST STATEMENT:			
	()	I am an environmentalist and think it is important to do whatever I can to reduce my vehicle's emissions, even if that means getting around in ways that are less convenient, more costly, or more time consuming.			
	<u>RECRU</u>	IT FROM RESPONDENTS WHO AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS:			
	()	I think it is important for me to take steps to drive my vehicle less, but I don't think it's reasonable to expect people to do things that are inconvenient, time-consuming, or more costly.			
	()	It is somewhat important to me to drive alone less, although I make decisions on how to get around mainly based on factors such as convenience or cost.			
	<u>THANK</u>	AND TERMINATE IF RESPONDENT AGREES WITH EITHER OF THESE STATEMENTS:			
	()	I am completely dependent on my vehicle to get to work and accomplish errands.			
	()	I wouldn't consider any way other than driving alone to commute or do errands.			
11.	()	the last grade of school you completed? Some high school/high school graduate/GED Some college/community college graduate/AA: Associate of Arts/technical school/professional business school College graduate/post-graduate degree exist you to take part in a discussion group with other people who live in this area. The session is			
ı woulu	inc will	ivite you to take part in a discussion group with other people who live in this area. The session is			

	,	ending. The discussion will be held on
	Group 1:()	6:00 pm - A light dinner of deli sandwiches and refreshments will be provided.
	Group 2:()	8:00 pm - Snacks and refreshments will be provided.
		RECTIONS TO FACILITY. We will call you the day before to remind you about this unting on your attendance, because we will only be inviting 10 people. May I please get
Name: _		
Telepho	ne: (home)	(work)

Focus Group Moderator's Guide

SAMPLE TRANSPORTATION/AIR QUALITY

MODERATOR'S GUIDE

Target Audience: Driving Public

- I. Opening remarks
 - A. What we're going to do in this group:
 - 1. Legitimate research how this research is used
 - 2. No selling
 - 3. No changing of minds
 - 4. No forcing of consensus
 - B. How we'll conduct the group:
 - 1. Informal conversation
 - 2. The role of the moderator
 - 3. No right or wrong answers
 - 4. Please be frank
 - 5. Agree to disagree
 - 6. Everyone has a right to his or her opinion
 - 7. Sponsors are in adjacent room behind one-way mirror
 - C. Introductions:
 - 1. How long in this area?
 - 2. Occupation, if employed outside the home?
 - 3. Family composition?
 - 4. Things your family likes to do together?
- II. When you think about issues that affect the quality of life in the region, what comes to mind?

[THIS IS A QUICK PROBE TO SEE WHETHER TRAFFIC CONGESTION OR THE ENVIRONMENT COMES UP AS A PRESSING ISSUE.]

- A. What would you say are the most important issues facing you?
- B. What kinds of things do you think individuals living in the area can do to improve the quality of life?

- 1. What kinds of things do you think you as an individual can do to improve the quality of life?
- 2. When I say "quality of life," what does this idea mean to you?

[BASED ON OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE, THE FOLLOWING MAY BE USED TO PROBE DEEPER INTO THIS ISSUE.]

- a. What do you care about?
- b. What are the things in life that really matter to you?
- c. If you could have any more of any one thing in life, what would it be?
- 3. How important would you say it is that attention immediately be given to protection of the environment in this region?
 - a. Are there elements of the area's environment that need protection?
- 4. How important would you say it is that attention immediately be given to traffic congestion in this region?
 - a. Are there aspects of the area's congestion that need special attention?

MODERATOR WILL PRESENT A SELECTION OF ADS. PARTICIPANTS WILL ADDRESS EACH AD IN LIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. THERE WILL BE EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF EACH, AND THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF WHICH MESSAGE IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN INFLUENCING THEIR ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR. BY END OF DISCUSSION THEY WILL HAVE DETERMINED WHICH ADS APPEAR TO BE MOST CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGY OF THE CAMPAIGN AND WHICH MESSENGER(S) APPEARS TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE.

- C. I'm going to show you some ads that you might see in the newspaper or magazines. As I show each, I'd like you to tell me:
 - 1. What point do you think they are trying to make with this ad?
 - 2. What do they want you to do (as a result of seeing this)?
 - 3. Who do you think they want to see this?
 - 4. Do you feel like you are part of this "target audience?" Why/Why not?
 - 5. Is what this says believable? Why/Why not?
 - 6. Do you agree with what it says? Why/Why not?
 - 7. Where would you expect an ad like this to come from?
 - a. What would you think if it came from the federal government?
 - b. What would you think if it came from your state government?
 - c. What would you think if it came from your city government?

- d. Does it mean more if it comes from a national organization or a local organization, or vice versa?
- e. How about if it came from a nonprofit organization interested in the environment?
- f. What about a group of organizations, including the local government, local transportation organizations, and groups interested in the environment?
- 8. Which of these sources would be most credible delivering the messages I have been describing?
- D. [FALSE CLOSE; MODERATOR GIVES PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION SHEETS TO FILL OUT AND LEAVES THE ROOM TO ASK SPONSORS IF THEY WANT ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ASKED.]
- E. Thanks and closing

##

Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

1.	Age:	2	Sex:	□ male	□ female
3.	Occupation:				
4.	□ sor tec	ne high school/high ne college/commun hnical school/profes lege graduate/post-	ity college g ssional busi	graduate/AA ness school	: Associate of Arts/
5.	How would you describe	e the area where yo	ou live?	□ urban	□ suburban □ rura
6.	What were the primary	factors in your decis	sion to live i	n this area?	(check all that apply)
	□ cost of hou□ schools□ access to other:	-		□a	ccess to mass transit ccess to stores oseness to work
7.	Number of members in	your household:	□ 1-2 □ 3-4	□ 5 □ 6	
	Number of children:	List ages:			
8. In a typical week, about how many times do you drive a passenger vehicle? Count ea time you get behind the wheel and drive someplace.					vehicle? Count each
	time you get benind the	wheel and drive so	теріасе.	□ 1 □ 2	0 – 10 times/week 1 – 20 times/week 1 – 30 times/week nore than 30 times/week
9.	Do others in your house	shold also drive a pa	assenger ve	ehicle? □ ye	es 🗆 no
	If yes , how many times	per week?		□ 1 □ 2	10 times/week1 – 20 times/week1 – 30 times/weeknore than 30 times/week
10	a. How do you usually g	et to and from work	? □ drive □ ride □ carp		ar □ walk □ bike □ other:

10b.	How would you categorize you	ur non-work tra	ıvel?			
	□ errands□ leisure activities□ other:	□ combine tr □ combine tr □ combine tr	rips □ go	as you need as you need as you need	to	
	How do you travel during this (Check all that apply) What are your transportation of	ve my own car e public transit e a bike lk eer: e check all tha	(bus/rail)	ate each option a	as	
	DD, FAIR, or POOR.	•			·	
	DRIVE ALONE		Available:	□ yes	□ no	
	accessibility convenience of sche cost safety pleasant travel envir		GOOD	FAIR □ □ □ □ □ □	POOR □ □ □ □ □	
	CARPOOL/VANPOOL		Available:	□ yes	□ no	
	accessibility convenience of sche cost safety pleasant travel envir		GOOD	FAIR	POOR □ □ □ □ □	
	BUS/OTHER PUBLIC TRAN	SIT	Available:	□ yes	□ no	
	accessibility convenience of sche cost safety pleasant travel envir		GOOD	<u>FAIR</u>	POOR □ □ □ □	

WALK		Available:	□ yes	□ no
	accessibility convenience of schedule cost safety pleasant travel environment	GOOD	FAIR □ □ □ □ □ □	POOR □ □ □ □ □ □
BICYCL	E	Available:	□ yes	□ no
	accessibility convenience of schedule cost safety pleasant travel environment	GOOD	FAIR □ □ □ □ □ □	POOR
OTHER	, PLEASE EXPLAIN:			
	accessibility convenience of schedule cost safety pleasant travel environment	GOOD	FAIR □ □ □ □ □ □	POOR

12. Would you change/keep anything about your ways of getting around?